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ABSTRACT

This paper presents stories prospective teachers tell about interactions with and evaluations of former teachers. These interactions between remembrances of past school experiences and projected or current teaching practice have the potential to reinterpret the past making it useful in the present. Data were gathered from interviews and an analytic distinction is drawn between the stories themselves and the particular beliefs or action theories the informants value. For teacher educators, the tales are strongly related to present beliefs about teaching. Remembrance potentially forms a powerful part, negative or positive, of learning to teach. Memories represent one source of material which assists teacher candidates to grow into reflective professionals and is a tool with a multitude of uses for teacher educators. Teacher tales represent one reasonable point to initiate revision of the past, and more importantly challenge present beliefs. (Author/LL)

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National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

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Research Report 92-4

LOOKING AT OLD PHOTOGRAPHS: INVESTIGATING THE TEACHER TALES THAT NOVICE TEACHERS BRING WITH THEM

James V. Mead

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National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

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The NCRTL is committed to research that will contribute to the improvement of teacher education and teacher learning. To further its mission, the NCRTL publishes research reports, issue papers, technical series, conference proceedings, and special reports on contemporary issues in teacher education. For more information about the NCRTL or to be placed on its mailing list, please write to the Editor, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, 116 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

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[1]Formerly known as the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (1985-1990), the Center was renamed in 1991.

Abstract

This paper describes the interaction between remembrances of past school experience and projected or current teaching practices. The author draws an analytic distinction between the stories themselves and the particular beliefs or action theories the informants value. For teacher educators, the tales are strongly related to present beliefs about teaching. Remembrance potentially forms a powerful part—negative or positive—of learning to teach. The author suggests that "old photographs" provide a potentially exciting teachable moment.

LOOKING AT OLD PHOTOGRAPHS: INVESTIGATING THE TEACHER TALES THAT NOVICE TEACHERS BRING WITH THEM

James V. Mead[1]

As I analyzed teachers' remembrances of their experiences in school, they reminded me of a personal memory. When I was 10 years old I often visited my great-grandmother. A large cigar box in the back parlor contained my favorite activity. In the box were sepia double photographs taken in the late 1800s, which I looked at with a stereographic magnifier. Most of these daguerreotypes were portraits of people in my family and their friends. My attention flagged quickly because I did not recognize the people portrayed. But the activity came alive when my great-grandmother sat and described the people I saw. Teachers' tales of their school days share many elements with my viewing those sepia photographs.

The informants whose tales I analyzed describe significant teachers like snapshots from the past. Molding the stories about the past serves a variety of communicative purposes. My great-grandmother selected certain features of the photographs to talk about. Her commentary provided heightened entertainment value to speaker and listener, and her stories piqued my interest. Novice teachers, besides telling entertaining tales about teaching from times past, also use the anecdote to demonstrate their developing teaching expertise by grounding their beliefs in a tale about "real teachers."

My story about my great-grandmother formed an unfinished propositional bridge not grounded in my present experience—until I wrote this paper. The story works on several levels to illustrate my point. First, I am the lone survivor of the "experience": The reader has to trust what I say happened. I selected a single small set of experiences from a multitude of memories. The tale, moreover, provides an appealing personal disclosure to create empathy between author and reader.

Second, I am using the single personal experience to illustrate my present belief about a large set of data. This belief generalizes well beyond myself and my own experience. This mirrors what the novices do when they use a single experience to justify the way they think they should act in the classroom.

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[1]James V. Mead, doctoral candidate in educational administration at Michigan State University, is the archivist for the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. The author expresses appreciation to the following people for their helpful comments and assistance in preparing this paper: Christopher M. Clark, Jeannine Cormier, Mary M. Kennedy, Joann J. Mead, and Michelle Parker. The encouragement and guidance of Robert E. Floden and Bill McDiarmid beyond normal bounds is deeply appreciated and needs special recognition. The paper is dedicated to the memory of the author's great-grandmother who provided the activity that inspired this reflection.

Third, I have "thinned down" the experience and molded it to make my point. I cannot remember the reality of the experience precisely. I forget how often I looked at those photographs beyond it happening at least two or three times. The details I am unable to recall from 30 years ago do not detract from the utility of the story.

Fourth, what I reported raises a set of questions that parallel what we can ask the novices about their remembered teacher. The tale's significance does not lie in speculating whether it happened but in what it tells the listener about my present belief. If a novice teacher tells us about this great or bad teacher, I want to know how that belief fits into the novice's broader vision of teaching.

My recollection captures the tenuous link of causality to some memory established all those years ago. What these teachers and my great-grandmother recount is a history that smooths out irregularities and discontinuities (Huberman, 1989) to serve some story-telling purpose. The interviewees describe events they claim to have observed when they were students. But it is not as a phenomenon from the past that I am interested in teacher tales. These tales of former teachers differ significantly from Lortie's "apprenticeship of observation" that holds for every child who goes through school (Lortie, 1975). Lortie's description lead others to conclude that the apprenticeship is either faulted or unhelpful (Buchmann, 1987b; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1986; Little, 1981; Zeichner, Tabernick, & Densmore, 1987).

When the past exclusively informs the present we condemn the passive "learning process" that occurs. However, here the present informs and shapes the past. In the teacher tales, the recollection of the past is actively shaped by the present. The phenomenon of interest to me is situated in the present that is the window onto a vision of teaching the novice now holds. It just happens that access to the present lies in going through the past.

The tales produce a feeling of connection between a belief aspiring teachers hold and a describable behavior. Imagine you were a novice sitting in an interview. You wished to tell—for whatever motive—the interviewer a belief you felt. What better way than to pull out, as it were, an old treasured photograph of a former teacher. The teacher pictured in the photograph and the associated tale stand as concrete proof of any belief or behavior the novice wishes to tell us about.

The data, from the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach Study (TELT) of the National Center for Research on Teacher Education,[2] support the conclusion that novices invest emotional value in these memories. This suggests that educators should handle these

[2]The precursor to the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

teacher tales, these shared photographs of the past, with care. It is too easy to dismiss these personalized contributions, these student attempts to represent ideas and beliefs in communicable form, as distracting from the generalized and depersonalized reflection thought appropriate in university classes. The TELT data indicate that teacher candidates make frequent use of teacher tales suggesting to teacher educators these narratives might deserve a closer look.

Sample

This paper describes the stories prospective teachers (elementary, secondary English, and mathematics) tell about interactions with and evaluations of their former teachers. The teacher tales come from 95 interviews gathered by researchers from the National Center for Research on Teacher Education as part of the TELT study, a four-year longitudinal study of teachers' knowledge and beliefs in 11 teacher education programs (NCRTE, 1988). Although the instruments were designed to capture the significance of prospective teachers' past, they were not designed with this particular analysis in mind.

Informants for this analysis came from five preservice training institutions and two induction programs. The sample generated for intensive study by the NCRTE is detailed elsewhere by Ball and McDiarmid (1988). Briefly, the sites studied were selected to represent various features thought important in educating teachers. Within each site a random sample of all students in the selected program was drawn and studied intensively.

During their first interview, researchers asked teachers, "What do you remember about your elementary and secondary school experience?" The script also included a probe—"What stands out about elementary or secondary school?" Depending on whether the informant was a prospective elementary or secondary subject teacher, the interviewer asked, "What do you remember about mathematics (and/or writing) in elementary and secondary school?" Elementary teachers were asked about both subjects while secondary teachers were asked only about the subject they intended to teach. After an informant's initial response, interviewers asked a series of probes designed to get them to elaborate. For this analysis, I drew on 159 explicit references to particular teachers in 95 interviews. These descriptions formed the basis of the analysis.

The preservice teachers in the TELT study intended to teach various K-12 age groups; a small number did not intend to teach when they graduate. At the time these data were collected, the students were working toward either bachelor's or master's degrees in their chosen field. One induction program recruited participants with degrees from other fields and certified them to teach in the state. This induction program, run by a school

district, trained teachers as they worked for the district over a two-year period. The second induction program, run by a university, had the teachers in schools by special arrangement with a local district.

Analysis

I analyzed and coded descriptions of teacher tales according to the content of the story given. Initially, I coded whether the evaluation of the teacher was positive or negative, the gender and subject area specialty of the teacher described, and the inferences the informant drew from the story. I used descriptors such as subject matter expertise and emotional bond to describe as accurately as possible, in the informants' terms, the "plot" of their description. The "plot" represents the "thinned" essence or belief the informant chose to focus on.

To elaborate on the patterns, I used data elicited by another question on the same interview: "What attracted you to teaching?" Responses describing the personal attraction of teaching revealed a pattern. Informants elaborated on the quality ascribed to a former teacher in response to why the informant wanted to teach. This question also yielded some descriptions of former teachers to support the informants' choice of teaching.

Report on the Data

The tales that the teachers told lack detail about subject matter and learning. Beyond some vague labelling and a specific learning activity of short duration the subject matter plays a small role.[3]

I: What do you remember about elementary school?

R: One of the biggest things is the teachers themselves. . . . One teacher really stands out in my K through five experience, and that was my fourth-grade teacher. (Jerome, preservice elementary teacher)

I: What do you remember about English in high school?

R: Wow! I know there were teachers I liked. I remember Mr. ____ that was my sophomore year English teacher, he was a really nice guy. (Mabel, preservice high school English teacher)

[3] In the transcripts "I" stands for interviewer and "R" stands for respondent. Names of teachers are pseudonyms.

What we learn in these general instances is the importance aspiring professionals attached to the teacher's role. I suspect those aspiring to be lawyers, beauticians, and other occupations similarly testify to the contribution of a particular individual. Testimonies to the importance of role highlight what is missing from the data: Stories suggesting equally well-formed beliefs about subject matter, student learning, and other important facets of school life.

Beyond being "nice people," the teachers recalled were embedded in deep emotions. Out of 159 teachers explicitly described in the interviews, about half of the interviewees report close personal bonds with the teachers. In two thirds of those cases that relationship was positive. Jill and Julia, two preservice teachers in the sample, also mention a teaching technique along with the close personal bond. Perhaps their current purpose of becoming teachers causes them to mention the teaching technique. Not only do they believe teachers should "care in general," they also believe teachers make a difference through specific pedagogy. The following quotes illustrate these beliefs.

> There was one teacher that I had for algebra in 9th grade, for chemistry in 11th grade, physics in 12th grade, and computer science in 12th grade. I worked for him during the summer and I remember that sort of thing because you build a bond with a teacher to be a good influence. . . . I enjoyed most the classes where I got along well with the teacher. (Jessie, preservice high school teacher)

> I made a really strong friendship with one of my teachers and in fact she was my math teacher. I had her in 11th and 12th grade, she was also the one I was a teacher aide for . . . she was important to me and that made a difference in the way I looked at things going on in the class. . . . You know she was the type of person all the students really liked her. . . . She is a really good teacher [respondent details a pedagogical practice showing how this teacher got her to learn]. It's really nice to have someone else besides Mom and Dad sitting there and coaching you on. (Jill, preservice high school teacher)

> First year in high school . . . I didn't like science so I didn't participate much in class. . . . She started asking me questions to make me think about it . . . she would come up with things that pertain to my life and make me look at things in a scientific way. I went into the high science classes and just loved them from then on. (Julia, preservice high school teacher)

> I was closer to the teachers. Especially one very strong friendship with a teacher . . . that I was closer to the teachers made me feel not like a normal

> student. . . . I got very close to my high school art teacher. And he was very religious, and I didn't know it until my sophomore year. And for the rest of my high school I became very close. . . . He's probably the biggest thing that stands out in my mind. (Martha, preservice high school teacher)

Of those who mention close relationships with teachers, about a third of the informants describe bonds that were less than positive. In these tales of bad teachers the informant reports a personal dislike often seen as reciprocated by the teacher. They tell the tale to illustrate a distance they felt between themselves and a bad teacher:

> The second-grade teacher was not like that. A lot of times I ended up taking my homework home because I didn't understand it in class. It was the same class with the reading, I just sat there like—What am I supposed to do? (Jane, preservice elementary teacher)

> He [high school math teacher] made it difficult for me when I asked a question. He made me, he belittled me when I asked questions and after that I was afraid to ask anything. (Carmen, high school English teacher, induction program)

> I remember Mr. ___, my senior honors English teacher, he didn't like me. I remember when I told him what school I'd applied to. And he said, "Don't you think you should apply somewhere else?" I remember thinking "What would make you think I won't get in?". . . I remember being very offended by it. (Mabel, preservice high school teacher)

> She didn't help me at all. I'd go after class to find out what I am doing wrong. "I'm doing well in all my subjects, all my other classes, I'm not [in your class], I'm a pretty good student, and here in this one class . . . I'm bombing." She would just talk about everything and nothing and she would say she'd do something but she didn't do it. The teacher took the paper to read and comment on. She then duplicated the paper for the whole class and they ripped it apart—it was way beyond constructive criticism. (Jane, preservice elementary teacher)

These positive and negative snapshots of "the world as I see it" are highly personalized. What do these views tell us about the informants' present beliefs about teaching? They show that novice teachers in the TELT sample believe a personal relationship between teacher and a student is a critical part of teaching. The remembrance serves to illustrate how these novices believe teacher-student relationships should be. Although we might expect teachers to emphasize the personal aspects of teaching in

elementary school, what is striking is how frequently these novices mention the importance of personal relationships between *secondary* teachers and their students.

The tales, whether positive or negative, also express the importance of individual attention. In the negative cases, the individual reports a gulf between teacher and student. The teacher tales portray students who are confused or anxious and who feel isolated from the teacher. The teacher, according to the informant, does everything possible to maintain distance through insensitivity, random or systematic humiliation, or an inability or unwillingness to explain the subject matter, and so forth.

In the positive tales we hear of bridging that gulf between student and teacher. Teachers are friends, parent surrogates, caring people who displayed a personal interest in the academic career and social development of the informant. The interest the teacher showed in the informant extended both beyond the classroom and through time. Informants claim they were friends with the teacher. They report meeting with these teachers outside the classroom on a social basis. They cite working for a teacher in a summer job as proof of the personal concern that the teacher took in their relationship. Informants also see the relationship they report as extending over time. The examples below are from informants in their 20s and 30s who claim that the relationship between the teacher and themselves is still active. Viewed as concrete descriptions of a novice's present beliefs and ideals they provide a fascinating picture:

> One teacher in particular, Mrs. ___, who I see from time to time now, she was real concerned about it [i.e., making sure the student had got the point the teacher wished to get across earlier], and I was a new student there and she just was real concerned about me learning. . . . I think she helped me with a spelling test as far as learning how to *study* my vocabulary. Well, she worked with me after school on that. (Louise, preservice elementary teacher)

> I think the most positive influences have been the teachers. I can remember in second grade, where we had to write a poem about love, and you know, I handed it in and I forgot totally about it. And a few years ago I saw my second-grade teacher, and she said "Caroline, come here." And I go over to her and she pulls out her wallet, and out of her wallet she pulls this piece of paper and my poem is written on it. And I, mean, it is just really positive experiences like that have made me decide if I could influence people like that I would feel fulfilled. (Caroline, high school English teacher, induction program)

Beyond the importance of personal closeness, we also see another belief these novices have about teaching. The informants are quick to tell tales that show teachers gain respect by behaving in one or a combination of three ways. The first way is showing care and concern. With or without the sense of personal intimacy, these tales illustrate the belief that teachers are part of a caring profession. The emphasis in the previous stories reported a caring focused on the informant. In the following samples that caring begins to surface as a teacher's duty to care for all students.

> Well, I did well through the algebra and geometry, and when we started getting trigonometry, I faltered a little there. I'm not sure what it was. I remember the teachers who were very helpful and got it across to me. (Jack, preservice elementary teacher)
>
> Well, they always seemed very helpful and they had nice personalities, at least from my point of view as a child. (Lee, preservice elementary teacher)
>
> She cared about the kids really learning. She picked up on what would make them want to learn. She wasn't just interested in the subject matter, they've got to learn it, and if they don't, who cares? (Felice, induction elementary teacher)

On the negative side, lack of caring figures as another theme. As in the positive caring stories, informants demonstrate a generalized belief about how teachers ought to care.

> One of them tried to be caring but it was one of those things they say children can detect [lack of care]. I didn't care for it at all. He tried to, but it didn't work. (Louise, preservice elementary teacher)
>
> I remember my fifth-grade teacher . . . she was an older woman. She was about to retire and I think she had been teaching too long. She was not mean. She did not seem very motivated and I can remember that was probably my least favorite year in elementary school. The teacher would pass out these big laminated worksheets and marking pencils. . . . You could cheat off your neighbor, you all worked together, she said this was okay with her. (Gail, preservice elementary teacher)
>
> We had the worst chemistry department in high school. The teachers would get up and read out of the chemistry book. They would read a chapter to us for 40 minutes. We would leave the room, we'd say I read that last night, we

hated that class. So we stopped reading at night, and heard it in class. (Melissa, preservice English teacher)

The second way to gain respect is to be innovative or take risks in your teaching. Fewer novices told stories that illustrated this belief.

She made math fun . . . she made it fun in an artistic way. I loved art in school, and I don't know how she did it, but we did a sewing thing, with geometric shapes. (Felice, induction elementary teacher)

I don't necessarily think of him as a good teacher. . . . He got some things across. He was oblivious to the outside world, very introspective. He would do a proof on the board, the typical calculus way that we were supposed to do, as what we were learning in the textbook. And then he would laugh and he'd say, "Well, you could do it this way too," and he'd do it by geometry or he would prove it to us by algebra. "Well you won't learn that until the third year of college." [She describes the disbelieving reaction of students to this.] But he really showed us that there's more than one approach to a problem! The really neat thing about him that I respected was that if you could figure out a different way to do it, he would accept that way just as well. (Mavis, preservice elementary teacher)

We read things that people thought we shouldn't read. Not because they were risqué or anything. But they were too far above us intellectually. She more or less let us know we could read anything we wanted to and we could understand it if we put our minds to it. . . . She explained it to us and we had a lot of discussion. I had never been in an English class where there was a lot of discussion. (Lara, preservice elementary teacher)

The third way to gain student respect was having the ability to communicate with students. The following quotations represent short parts of the tales they told to illustrate this belief:

I had an English teacher that I thought was great my sophomore year. That was the only year in high school that I really enjoyed English. He talked to the students on their own level. . . . We had to write an essay a week and we could write it on anything that we wanted. (Molly, preservice elementary teacher)

They [honors class teachers] came right out and said, "I expect a great deal of you, you will do this better." If you did something disappointing, they just

> gave it back to you. "Do it over." They never let you think you could get away with doing half a job. (Melissa, preservice English teacher)

These two tales show two types of communication. The first example illustrates the belief that teachers should communicate with students at their own level. The second example represents a belief about the ability of teachers to communicate either their expectations or the subject matter clearly to students. This second belief among novices shows up fairly frequently in the tales they tell and is particularly clear when they give a negative instance:

> [high school English teacher] You would hand in papers or something and she would get them back like the day before the test. . . . You can make the same mistake on the next paper and would not know that you did on the first one. (Gertrude, preservice math teacher)

> It [independent learning] was all at your own pace and I didn't like that at all. You'd hand in the stuff and he'd correct it. . . . You didn't learn anything, because if you didn't understand it, he really didn't put all that much effort into trying to get you to understand. There were 20 other kids that had different problems because you were all working at your own pace. . . . I was very discouraged. (Lee, preservice elementary teacher)

Discussion and Implications

You could simply tell Lee—whose teacher tale is the last I quoted above—his belief is wrong but I suspect he would not listen. Lee, a preservice elementary teacher candidate, reveals the potential such stories could serve to justify present practice. He has an emotionally charged tale supposedly based on a "bad teacher" he had. He describes how isolated and confused he felt as a student. He used this tale to counter the suggestion by a teacher education program that individualized instruction in elementary mathematics might be a useful approach. Whether Lee's experience shaped his belief or the belief shaped the experience is his psychoanalyst's problem, not his teacher educator's.

Floden and Huberman (1989) note how selective recollection is (for example, Bartlett, 1932; Nisbett & Wilson, 1980). They claim these recollections represent unreliable reports of past experience and thinking. For this analysis—and for teacher educators—whether the informants report the past with veracity is immaterial. Instead, these teacher tales represent accurate reports of present beliefs and attitudes. Support for this interpretation also came from the consistency with which this belief of novices appeared.

The convictions described in the novices' teacher tales were consistent with the reasons they gave for becoming a teacher. When informants stated that they enjoyed communicating with students, they often ascribed a similar attribute to a former teacher. "I like kids" the ubiquitous rationale for entering teaching was frequently followed by a story of how a former teacher "liked" their students (including themselves) in some way.

This consistency was maintained elsewhere in the interviews. An informant tells a positive tale about a patient mathematics teacher. In another part of the interview the same informant tells of an impatient engineer father unable to discuss the ideas of math despite an apparent aptitude for the subject. Another informant cites being in tune with the emotions of students as a goal of teaching—a belief reiterated later in the interview by a negative tale about an elementary teacher who forced that informant to beat herself on the hand in front of the class. She refused to go to school for a week because of embarrassment.

In a couple of cases the novices confess their confusion over the significance of the tales they tell. They reveal some of the struggle to achieve the consistency Floden and Huberman (1989) describe. One novice portrayed a teaching nun as difficult and demanding. In this tale the teacher stimulated learning by fear and yet, on later reflection, got credit for "teaching me something I have to thank her for." The novice's current confusion suggests the memory from the past is where some change needs to occur. Teaching nuns, like mothers-in-law, make good stereotype material for comedians and to entertain friends with. For a prospective teacher, tales like "Sister Scary" serve as professional puzzles for a novice teacher (so does "Mr. Fun-Times-But-No-Learning"). This novice believes teachers should not use fear, but the "Sister Nasty" tale suggests the opposite. I see this tale as a plea for assistance on the part of the novice, a plea the teacher educator can respond to.

The role of these novice tales can be contrasted with the role of stories in philosophical argument. Like the philosopher, the novice teacher constructs a tale to illustrate belief. But the philosophers' purpose is to persuade the reader about their belief. They make no claim that the illustration represents truth or reality. Novices, on the other hand, use the illustration *as a warrant* for their belief. The philosopher has kept the two views of the world—that is, "as it is" and "as it seems"—separate (Williams, 1985), while the novice teacher may transform an illustration, into justifying evidence. The novice claims a belief in friendship, produces a memory to support that belief, then merges the belief and the anecdote so now the tale stands as proof, not merely as illustration, of the belief. The

tale about a friendship between teacher and student becomes the confirmation for how things should be.

The teacher tales represent a rich collage of beliefs about teachers and teaching. The informants focus on the importance of the teacher's role and building a teacher's sense of self. They attach great significance to the teacher who establishes and maintains a bond between teacher and student. On the darker side, they believe bad teachers deliberately avoid or, through insensitivity, frustrate such relationships. Novices believe in the care a teacher should show that extends to all students over long periods of time. While we might be comforted that a novice express a belief in care and concern, we might also ask whether these ideals foster successful teaching. How, for example, does a secondary school teacher achieve the individual intimacy described in the teacher tales with students they see for only an hour a day? Instead of realizing that ideal relationship with all 150 or so students they teach, secondary teachers are more likely to select a few students. A seemingly noncontroversial belief could be used to justify selecting a few favored students based on the individual teacher's particular criterion of teacher-student intimacy. Student docility, gender, ethnicity, or personal appearance represent some disturbing criteria a teacher might choose to select students with whom they form that "special bond."

Teacher tales provide a useful way to access what novices believe. As I have just done, teacher educators and students can construct some interesting and challenging propositions about teachers and teaching based on personal stories the students tell. The key is to view the teacher tale as the object of a conversation and not a report of the past. A discussion that teases out the beliefs embedded in the story provides an excellent opportunity for the reflection so many now advocate—reflection arising from what at first blush is unproblematic. If, as I suggest, these pictures of practice come charged with emotion, then teacher educators do need to support the novices. The educator needs to be a supportive challenger if this reasoning comes with emotional power.

In the educator's favor is what Buchmann (1987a) calls a loose connection between premises and intended action. Each novice needs a chance to consider alternative explanations for the plot—poor classroom management, lack of teacher subject matter knowledge, or a host of other possibilities that might equally well explain what happened. Within each tale lies a wealth of "teachable (or, more correctly, learning) moments." Reflection by the novice alone could lead merely to greater rationalization for current beliefs. Personal doctrines require exposure in the public world of teaching. In a supportive but challenging environment the teacher educator can make use of teacher tales. They

provide an opportunity to model directly the shape of enquiry we hope tomorrow's teachers might take into their classroom.

These old photographs do not represent the foundation of teacher education. They simply represent one source of material which assists teacher candidates to grow into reflective professionals. A photograph or teacher tale is a tool with a multitude of uses. Ignore the beliefs a novice brings to their training in these tales and, as Mary Kennedy observed, we sometimes see the outcome:

> A funny thing happens to teachers faced with a roomful of fifth graders. They forget what they learned in high-priced teacher education classes. What comes out of their mouths is exactly what they heard when they were in fifth grade. (Quoted in Schimpf, 1990, p. 10)

The potential of the past to create the future is well documented. The more exciting possibilities lie in our capacity to reinterpret the past making it useful in the present. Teacher tales represent one reasonable point to initiate revision of the past and, more importantly, challenge present belief.

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